

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

Memory Lane is best forgotten

The concept of Memory Lane, a file search program, is great. Unfortunately, the reality is not so great.

Memory Lane is a text retrieval program for personal computers, designed to search files for a specified word or words. If you've forgotten the name of the file that holds the information sought, the program can simply be directed to search the contents of all files for a specific string of characters.

Newly updated by Group L Corp., Herndon, Va., Memory Lane is a bright idea that turns out to be poorly implemented. At a list price of \$99, it seems much too expensive for the value it provides — except for one kind of situation.

At first glance, the program seems to have a lot of potential. As a memory-resident program, it offers the unusual ability of allowing



Segal

you to search for information without exiting your currently loaded program. It also provides a cut and paste feature that transfers text from one file to another.

To be fair, Memory Lane does what it advertises. But — and this is a very big but — it does it with difficulty, and forces you to struggle with the program.

Some of its shortcomings are:

✓ Lengthy learning time. Although the promotional material claims that searches can be conducted "in seconds," I struggled for more than half an hour before I was able to do what I wanted.

✓ Slow processing time. Searching through numerous files is a lumbering process that takes many minutes, depending on the number and size of files being searched. Its only saving grace is the indexing feature, which allows

you to quickly access files that have already been indexed. But if your use of the program is occasional, reindexing newly added files prior to each use is a time-consuming extra step.

✓ Confusing manual. The documentation is short and sweet, but hard to understand if you're a beginner.

I'll admit I might have warmed more to Memory Lane if I had not already been spoiled by another program that performs similar search tasks more quickly and easily.

Text Search, a feature of the Norton Utilities program, available from Peter Norton Computing of Santa Monica, Calif., is so quick and easy to use that I found myself constantly using it even after I had learned to use Memory Lane. It costs about the same as Memory Lane, \$100, but includes about a dozen other handy functions as well.

Text Search is not a memory resident program and doesn't have

the index feature, but works so fast and is so easy to use that the time it takes to perform a search is still much quicker than Memory Lane. Almost no learning time is necessary.

Text Search also lacks the cut and paste feature. But this is a minor point, in my opinion, since it's just as easy to use the text move function of your word processing program.

The only type of application where Memory Lane shines in comparison to Text Search, is where repeated, constant searches are required of the same, very large group of files. In such a case, it is conceivable that the response time for each search would be less than the unindexed Text Search program.

Hillel Segal is an independent computer consultant and author of the monthly Executive Computing Newsletter, published by the Association of Computer Users, P.O. Box 9003, Boulder 80301.